

Hiram Sibley Warehouse  
315-331 North Clark Street  
northeast corner of North Clark  
Street and the Chicago River  
Chicago  
Cook County  
Illinois

HABS No. ILL-1047

HABS  
ILL,  
16-CHIG,  
49-

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Washington Planning and Service Center  
1730 North Lynn Street  
Arlington, Virginia

ADDENDUM  
FOLLOWS

HIRAM SIBLEY WAREHOUSE  
(Central Cold Storage Warehouse)HABS  
ILL,  
16-CHIC,  
49-

Location: 315-331 North Clark Street; northeast corner of North Clark Street and the Chicago River; Chicago, Cook County, Illinois.

Present Owner: Central Cold Storage Company, Chicago.

Present Use: Warehouse.

Statement of Significance: The Warehouse, constructed in 1883, on the north bank of the Chicago River, is the first instance in which wood piles have been used to support a building wall.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

## A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners: Legal description of the property: Lots 2, 3 and 4 of Block 2 in Original Town of Chicago in the southeast quarter section 9-39-14. Platted by Canal Commissioners, August 4, 1830. Recorded May 29, 1837.

The following is an abstract of the chain of title contained in Book 454, pp. 31-33 in the Cook County Recorder's Office:

The property was owned by Charles L. Hancock's trustees as of January 23, 1864 when it was sold to Arthur W. Austin (No Document recorded). Austin appears to have been controlling the property until the time when Hiram Sibley began to obtain the land in a series of transactions. Sibley received lot 2 from Theodore G. Dickinson and wife on July 27, 1882 (Document 410603), lot 3 from Emanuel Frankenthal and wife on October 14, 1882 (Document 425927), the south 60' of the north 120' lot 4 from Thomas P. Smith, wife, et al. on October 20, 1882 (Document 427154), the north 60' of lot 4 from Connecticut Mutual Life Insurance Company on April 17, 1883 (Document 460991), and finally lot 4, except the north 120', from Sidney A. Willard on August 13, 1883 (Document 488192). On January 15, 1895, the deed was transferred from Elizabeth M. Sibley et al. to Sibley Warehouse and Storage (Document 2161419). The property was sold to the Central Cold Storage Company on August 7, 1919 (Document 6593234-3); they are the present owners, as of the last recorded entry, dated December 26,

1941 (Document 12816318).

2. Date of erection: 1883.
3. Architect: George H. Edbrooke.

"Obituary," American Architect. V. 43, No. 945 (February 3, 1894), p. 49:

Mr. George H. Edbrooke, an architect widely known in Chicago, where, with his father a well-known contractor and his brother Willoughby J. Edbrooke who was Supervising Architect under the last administration, he lived for many years, and known also in New York, where he had of late practiced, died in the latter city, by suicide, a few days ago. Mr. Edbrooke, both in Chicago and New York, enjoyed an excellent reputation, and had a good business. His last important building, the Brooklyn Savings Bank, which is to cost about a quarter of a million, is not yet complete, and he had recently finished another building of about the same value. He also designed the Adams Express Company's building, and one of his buildings in Chicago is that on Clark and Lake Streets (sic) for the Sibley Seed Co. Notwithstanding his success, or, perhaps as a consequence of the mental strain incident to so much responsibility and anxiety, he had of late fallen into despondency, the preliminary stage, no doubt, of cerebral disorganization."

4. Builders, suppliers, etc.: Pile contractors were Fitzsimons and Cornell Frank A. Randall, History of the Development of Building Construction in Chicago (Urbana: The University of Illinois Press, 1949), p. 197. The builder was W. A. Wells A. T. Andreas, History of Chicago, V. 3 (Chicago: A. T. Andreas Company, Publishers, 1886), p. 907.
5. Original plans, construction, etc.: From the original Building Permit #2759, dated October 16, 1883, in Book D, January 1, 1882 - September 17, 1885, in the Department of Buildings, Chicago: "Hiram Sibley [sic], 7-story warehouse, 160' front, 187' deep, 90' high, at North Clark and the Chicago River, \$270--amount paid for permit."

"The building is divided into three approximately equal portions--the 2 west portions 7 stories high and the east portion 9 stories high--and is supported on spread foundation except of the river frontage, which is supported on 3 lines of 30-foot oak piles placed 3 feet apart along the wall."

"Although wood piles had been used at an early date, in the foundations of grain elevators along the Chicago river, their first use under a building wall did not come until

1883, when they were driven under the river wall of the Hiram Sibley & Company Warehouse, 315-31 N. Clark Street. From the records of the pile contractors, Fitzsimons and Connell, it appears that three rows were driven with the piles spaced three feet on centers along the wall. The oak piles were 30 feet long, with the cutoff about one foot above Chicago City Datum. Hydrographs show that the tops of these piles were then below the water level." Randall, op. cit.

For an early description of the building, see Supplementary Material.

6. Notes on alterations and additions: Records of the Department of Buildings, Chicago, indicate an addition to the cold storage building, dated June 29, 1920 (Permit #57006, Book N 22, p. 106). There have also been many minor alterations. A permit for a new concrete foundation was issued October 17, 1945 (Permit #68325, Book 55, p. 223) see below:

"In 1945 a new concrete dock was constructed, with 45-foot steel-piling, and the river wall was underpinned with concrete, cutting the tops of the piles off at - 2.5, C.C.D., the new intended river water level. 50 wood piles, 50 feet long were added on the river side of the old dimension - stonewall foundations. Mundie & Jensen served as architects, and Frank A. Randall as engineer." Ibid., p. 97.

B. Historical Events and Persons connected with Structure:

Very little is known of the Hiram Sibley Company in early history of Chicago. Andreas records that the original Hiram Sibley seed warehouse was located on North Water Street. That building was destroyed by fire on May 25, 1884, at a loss of \$130,628. Andreas, op. cit., p. 121.

C. Bibliography:

Andreas, A. T. History of Chicago. V. 3. Chicago: A. T. Andreas Company, Publishers, 1886. Pp. 90, 121.

Condit, Carl W. The Chicago School of Architecture. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1964. P. 58, Fig. 16.

"Fire-proof warehouse for Hiram Sibley Co. in course of construction; George H. Edbrooke, architect," Inland Architect 2: 132, 134 (November, 1883).

2-page drawing of proposed building, view from river; also description.

"George H. Edbrooke, Obituary," American Architect. V. 43, No. 945 (February 3, 1894). P. 49.

Randall, Frank A. History of the Development of Building Construction in Chicago. Urbana: The University of Illinois Press, 1949. Pp. 19, 96, 97. Photograph.

Withey, Henry F. and Elsie Rathburn. Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (Deceased). Los Angeles: New Age Publishing Co., 1956. P. 189.

D. Supplementary Material:

"Fire-proof warehouse for Hiram Sibley Co. in course of construction; George H. Edbrooke, Architect," Inland Architect 2: 132, 134 (November, 1883).

A fireproof warehouse for Hiram Sibley & Company, by George H. Edbrooke, architect. This great warehouse now in course of construction will be one of the finest, as well as the largest, in the city of Chicago. It has a frontage on Clark Street of 189 feet by 240 feet deep (or river front of 240 feet). The river front is to be 9 stories high, the Clark Street front seven stories, with basement and sub-basement. The whole construction is to be entirely fireproof. The exterior all to be faced with Addison pressed brick, with cut-stone details. The front on Clark Street is planned for stores of the most modern design, with large plate-glass windows, stained glass transoms, light iron division for the doors, and iron girders, spanning each store front. Above the stores, the several floors are to be used for the general offices of Hiram Sibley & Co., the north 60 feet of first floor to be elaborately fitted up. Immediately back of the portion used for offices is the warehouse, nine stories high, each floor estimated in the construction to hold a weight of five hundred pounds per foot. In estimating such a weight as before mentioned for the full nine stories, few would imagine the great weight the footings or foundations would have to sustain. On the river front piles are driven. The other piers or walls come on the natural earth. In looking at the foundation plan the footings of piers or walls seem to nearly cover the whole area. Mr. Edbrooke has carefully estimated every pound as near as possible, and has proportioned the base or bearing accordingly, as well as the supports above. Columns, girders, etc., to the roof. The river front is 240 feet long by nine stories high, and the magnitude can only be imagined by perhaps comparing the height of the Montauk Block for the elevation, and three times its front for the river front. The design of the river front is somewhat plainer in style than the Clark street front, but it has a grandeur and solid repose about

it that is not surpassed by any building in this city. The long, broad pilasters starting from the basement-story and terminating in arches at the top, seem to increase the apparent height. The architect has taken advantage of this and made the principal lines in the design perpendicular, which is highly satisfactory and far more effective than to have used horizontal string-courses to diminish the height. The openings generally are arched. The cornice is all to be of brick, with stone capping. No terra-cotta will be used. The whole exterior to be of general brick and cut stone. This warehouse, which has been constructed to accommodate the mammoth Western seed business of this house, and as a branch it is beyond question a phenomenal illustration of the business done by some of our large mercantile firms, and will be a monument to Hiram Sibley & Co., and a giant among the many large buildings of Chicago as well as a magnificent architectural production. The cost when completed will be \$500,000.

Prepared by Larry J. Homolka  
Historian  
National Park Service  
J. William Rudd  
Supervisory Architect  
National Park Service  
September, 1964

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL:

Industrial Chicago, V. 1. Chicago: The Goodspeed Publishing Company, 1891. P. 179:

"The Sibley Warehouse, fronting west one hundred and eighty-nine feet on Clark Street and south two hundred and forty feet on the river, was designed, in 1883, by George H. Edbrooke. The street front shows six stories, with first and second basements; and the river front eight stories, all in pressed brick with stone trimmings. The gateway to the warehouse and the stone fronts on Clark street, with the broad pilasters, convey to this house a sense of immunity unknown to that period on the north side. The second and third stories of the Clark street front are compressed into one by pilasters carrying arches above the windows of the third story, and this plan is carried out in simpler form in the next two stories. The upper story, or attic, shows groups of Norman windows, with a pilaster in the form of a buttress between each group above is the ample cornice and high parapet."

Prepared by Larry J. Homolka  
Historian  
National Park Service  
September, 1964

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: Built in 1883, this building is considered to be the first Chicago structure other than grain elevators to make use of piles.
2. Condition of fabric: Fair.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Number of stories: (see below).
2. Number of bays: 9 on the west.
3. Overall dimensions: 189'-0" x 240'-0".
4. Layout-shape: The building is divided into three sections. The two west sections are seven stories high, and the east section is nine stories high. The building is rectangular.
5. Wall construction: Masonry bearing wall, painted red.
6. Structural system: The building is wall bearing masonry throughout, supported on spread footings except for three lines of 30' oak piles (3 feet on center) along the river wall.
7. Openings:
  - a. Doorways: The west side now serves as a dock area with the dock inside the building.
  - b. Windows: The third and fourth floors on the west have three one-over-one-light double-hung windows per bay. The fifth and sixth floors have two two-over-one-light double-hung windows per bay, except in an extra long center bay, and in the two northwest bays. The seventh floor attic fenestration is a series of arched windows aligned with the windows on the bays below. On the south (river) elevation, most of the windows have been closed to allow for cold storage.
8. Roof:
  - a. Shape, covering: Flat, built-up.
  - b. Cornice, eaves: There are corbeled flat arches over bays at sixth floor. Just above is a brick corbeled,

dentilled, string course.

C. Description of Interiors:

1. Floor Plans: The first floor has receiving and dock areas on the west. The southwest portion of upper floors is generally untampered storage. The remainder of the building is tampered storage. The upper floors have areas ranging from 32° to 45° F. The lower floors have areas ranging from 32° to (-)18° F.
2. Stairways:
  - a. Elevators: There are four freight elevators which serve all floors. One original passenger elevator in the west portion of building no longer operates; however, the open cage remains.
  - b. Stairways: There are three stairwells, one in each section of the building. Interior stairways are enclosed in concrete wells which are not original. Four (original) fire escapes remain.
3. Flooring: Wooden.
4. Wall finish: Painted masonry.
5. Doorways and doors: Most existing doors are large cold storage doors, not original.
6. Trim: Decorative details on west facade in accents of low relief.

D. Site and Surroundings:

Setting and orientation: West facade faces Clark Street, and south facade fronts on the Chicago river. The area is an old wholesale district which still has a number of similar buildings. To the north is a badly deteriorating area, while nearby, along the river, there is new construction and/or land usage. This includes building for commercial purposes, and a few apartments. The present owner has expressed a desire to raze the building in the near future.

Prepared by J. William Rudd  
Supervisory Architect  
National Park Service  
August, 1964



Addendum to:  
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(Central Cold Storage)  
315-31 North Clark Street  
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PHOTOGRAPHS

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Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20240